REVIEW ON THE BIOGRAPHY OF BHAGWAN GOPINATH JI OF KASHMIR

BY

MR.JUSTICE S.N.KATJU

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AND

His Letters Expounding Shiva-Sakhti Philosophy

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PREFACE

A copy of the book "Bhagawan Gopinath Ji of Kashmir" by Shri S. N. Fotedar, published recently by the Bhagawan Gopinath Ji Trust, Kharyar, Srinagar (Kashmir) was sent to Mr. Justice Katju, Ex-Judge, Allahabad High Court, for review. He has posed a number of querries regarding Bhagwan Ji's Sadhana which resulted in his absorption in the Supreme and also Shakti Upasana, the traditional form of worship followed by Kashmiri Pandits and the impact of Kashmir Shaivism (Treka Darshan) on it.

His letters first dated 6-6-75 to Shri Prannath Kaul, Secretary, Bhagawan Gopinath Ji Trust and the second dated 6-7-75 to Shri Sridhar Joo Dhar. President, Bhagawan Gopinath Ji Trust were circulated to Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar of eliciting information on the salient points touched by him but no reply has been received so far.

Justice Katju has, on our request, also sent us an exhaustive review on Bhagawan Ji's biography in which he has discussed the subject of Shiva-Shakti Upasana and also the Trika System and the probable path followed by Bhagwan Ji in his Upasana, in his usual masterly and lucid style. He has also sent a rational treatise to Swami Lachaman Joo Shaiva, philosopher of Kashmir for reply on questions by him.

The present wave of materialism has resulted in loss of faith in religion but this will end some day and the religious tenets followed by our ancestors will be re-explored and men will revert to their past religious moorings. They will be a appalled to notice the haze that has enveloped our time honoured practice of Shiva-Shakti Upasana which formed the sheet anchor of our religious practices for over

a millennium and seek practical guidance which may not be available.

Justice Katju, one of the greatest living men of our community and who has been a Sadak from his early youth, has taken upon himself the task of ellucidation of Shiva-Shakti Upasana and the impact on it of the Treka doctrine. He has presented a comprehensive but at the same time a workable formula for the coming generation of Sadhaks of Shiva-Shakti Cult. This is a commendable task and it is the duty of all of us to cooperate in the matter and furnish him whatever information that may be available.

The four above mentioned documents are therefore published for eliciting information on the questions posed by him.

The replies when received will also be published as a seperate pamphlet or appended to this pamphlet.

Secretary

Bhagawan Gopinath Ji Trust,

Kharyar, Srinagar



BHAGAWAN GOPINATH JI

Copy of letter dated 6-6-75 from Mr. Justice Katju, 25 Edmonstone Road, Allahabad, to Shri Pran-nath Kaul, Secretary, Bhagawan Gopinath Ji Trust, Kharyar, Srinagar (Kashmir).

My dear Pran Nath Ji,

I am deeply grateful to you for sending me copies of the biography and souvenir on Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji. It is very kind of Pandit Shri Dhar Joo to remember me and asking you to write to me.

I feel sorry that I never met Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji during my visits to Kashmir As a matter of fact no one told me about him. I was last in Kashmir in 1967 when my wife and I went to Amarnath Ji.

I have read Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji's biography twice
with deep interest. I wish more is known about his Sad-
hana. It [illegible], from what I have read in the book, that
[illegible] the traditional sadhana of Shiva-Shakti as
is [illegible] amongst us, beginning with his Kul Devi
Sharika and following it up with the worship of Ragyan,
Jwala and Bhadrakali etc and lastly took to some form of
Aghora worship of Shiva for self realisation. Indian tra-
dition—not only a Kashmir—regards Abhinava Gupta and
other Savants of his line as adepts in Aghora Sadhana.
Kashmiri Shaivism is Shaiva philosophy as we have shakta-
philosophy. All Kashmiri Pandits are Shaktas strictly
following the smarta rules as also the shakta Agamas. We
have the worship of Panch-Devas which came into vogue
among the Hindus with the beginning of the Kali era-viz
Ganesh, Vishnu, Surya, Shiva and Devi. The line between
the last two sometimes gets thin but it is there. Among

the Shaivas, Shiva takes the prime place and among the Shaktas, the Devi—although the Devi is always worshipped along with Shiva. Each form of Devi has its corresponding Bhairava-Ragya's Bhairva is Buteshwar and Sharika's Bhairva is Vam Deva. In Kaulachar which we (the Kashmiri pandits) follow, the sadhak aims at becoming Shiva himself and I have known some adept Shakta Sadhaks taking to some form of Aghora sadhana towards the later stage of their lives.

It appears that the Kashmiri Shaivas such as Somanand and Abhinava Gupta etc sought to bring about a nearness between Shaiva and Shakta philosophy (darshan) and one who performs the Avaran आवरण puja of the yantras of Ragnyan, Sharika or Jwala can easily see it. I have always felt that the question as to how far the principles of pratyabhigya प्रत्यभिज्ञा Spand and Trika have influenced the paddhatis in our Devi puja requires deep investigation and that can be done only by those who are not only masters of Shaiva philosophy in Kashmir but are also full initiates (Purnabhishiktas) in Shakta forms of worship. Any philosophy must be based on what is actually done. You cannot have a philosophy of cricket or wrestling without there being any cricket or wrestling. It is obvious that Kashmir Shaivism does not affect the general forms of Devi worship which is practised by Kashmiri Pandits. The text book which deals with the practical sadhana of Kashmir Shaivism is Malini Vyayottar Tantra and it leaves the forms of worship of Ragnyan, Sharika and Jwala etc., absolutely untouched.

It is likely that Gopi Nath Ji practiced some forms of Aghora or Shaiva Sadhana towards the later stages of his life. He had became an Avadhoot who is freed from all shackles. Generally such Saints confer great boons on those who are near them but they are reluctant to teach the elementary forms of Sadhana. They may help the practitioner in higher stages in spiritual path. You cannot ex-

pect an Einstein to teach elementary mathematics in schools and Degree colleges. What they say is alright but what they do themselves need not be copied. It has very often happened in the history of the Hindus that after the passing away of a saint his disciples substituted his sayings for Shastrik tenets. This gave rise to the various Sant-margas (सन्तमार्ग) which deviated from the broad flow of Sanatan Dharma which is in accordance with the Shastras. Lord Krishna Himself says in the Gita that "Shastra is your pramana (तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते। The kashmiri Pandits as a community have always struck to Shastric tenets.

I am venturing to emphasise that the Trustees of Bhagwan Shri Gopi Nath Ji Trust while propagating the teachings of the Saint should not loose sight of the basic principles of Shiva-Shakti Sadhana which have always been our sheet anchor since times immemorial.

Please show this letter to Pandit Shridhar Joo Sahib. My daughter Vilas (wife of Brigadier Ashok Handoo at present posted in Srinagar) will hand over this letter to you along with a cheque which is my humble contribution to the Trust.

You may send the Memento and the biography to the following persons :

1. Pandit S. N. Sopory
   C-31 Maherina, Lakshmibai Jagmohan Das Marg,
   Bombay-36.

2. Mrs. Blanchede Vries Bernard
   "The Moorings" Box No. 1, North Broadway Upper
   Nyack, New York, 10960 U.S.A.

3. Shri J. S. Rao 709, Asia House, Kasturba Gandhi
   Marg, New Delhi-1.

Mrs. Bernard is the widow of the late Dr. Pierre

Arnold Bernard who was the Primate of the Tantrik Order in America. I will write to Mrs. Bernard about the Trust.

Shri Rao is the Secretary of the A. I. Saraswat Cultural Organisation. I am sending a letter for him which you may forward along with your letter, memento and Biography. Mr. Rao will see that an article on Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji appears in the "Sanyukt Saraswat" — the Journal of the Saraswats.

I will send you more names later. I am also sending some forms of the A. I. Saraswat Cultural Organisation together with a copy of the "Round Table" which contains an article of mine on "Tantrik Art".

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) S. N. Katju.

Copy of a letter dated 6-7-1975 from Mr. Justice S. N. Katju, 25, Edmonstont Road, Allahabad to President (Shridhar Joo Dhar) Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji Trust, Kharyar, 2nd Bridge, Srinagar.

My dear Sir,

It was very kind of you to have asked Pandit Pran Nath Kaul, Secretary of Bhagwan Gopinath Ji Trust, to send me the two books on him. I have read the book and the life of Gopinath Ji with deep interest and have sent a long letter to Prannath Ji giving my personal reactions about him after going through the book. The letter is indeed meant for you and I am sure you would have seen it by now.

In my view there is great confusion among the Kashmiri Pandits about Kashmir Shaivism. We are by tradition, since long, the worshippers of Shiva-Shakti. We don't follow the practices, generally, which are prescribed by the texts of Somanand and Abhinava Gupta etc. The Malini Viyayottar Tantra does not say anything about the worship of Ragyan, Jwala, or Sharika etc. which we have continuously practiced. Abhinava Gupta ranks very high among the philosophers on Shaivisim — not only in Kashmir, but throughout India. As a matter of fact the Aghora अघोर) Sadhaks in India claim him as one of their doyens. It is likely that starting with the traditional worship of Shiva Shakti, Abhinava Gupta and others of his School turned to Shaivism — as distinguished from the worship of the Devi — -and practiced the upper most Sadhana of Shiva — particularly Aghora. The Trika system is an attempt to reconcile the Shaiva philosophy with Shakta philosophy. The question is whether the Trika system has influenced the Shastrik worship of the Kaulas as practiced

by them all over India or Trika itself is based on our own Kaula forms. There are three Schools of Shakta worshippers — the Kashmir, Kerala, and Banga for both Shri Kul and Kali Kul. I have repeatedly suggested to friends in Kashmir that the matter should be investigated by a team of Kaula Sadhaks in Kashmir and exponents of Kashmir Shaivism.

My own Gurdeva was a Kanyakubja Brahmin belonging to the Kashmir School. I came in contact with him in 1936. He lived in Allahabad and was a householder. He kept me on tenterhooks for several years insisting that I must follow my own Kulachar and should take initiation from a Kashmiri Pandit Sadhak. I could not find any. Eventually he initiated me and my wife in 1944. We were his first disciples. I have got a paddhati of Ragyan from Kashmir and he initiated us in the worship of Ragyan. In about two years time we were made Purna-bhishiktas (पूरणीभिषिक्त) My Guru took me in his hands and moulded me as he thought fit for more than 30 years. He died two years back. Since my initiation I have been on the path. How much ground I have covered I do now know, I am confronted with some problems in course of my Sadhana and I will seek your guidance. I will write to you again. Hope you are well.

With respectful regards.

Yours with respect

(Sd.) S. N. Katju

REVIEW
ON
"Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji of Kashmir"
By
Mr. Justice Shiva Nath Katju

I have known Pandit Shridhar Joo Dhar retired Conservator of Forests, J & K Government, since the Summer of 1936 when I met him for the first time at the Shrine of Shri Sharda Ji on the banks of Krishna Ganga, now in Pakistan occupied Kashmir. It was at his suggestion that a copy of the biography of the Late Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji of Kashmir was sent to me. I have read and reread the book which has been very ably written by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar with absorbing interest. It deals with the life story of the greatest Kashmiri Saint of the century.

Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji was born on 3rd July 1898 in Bana Mohalla, Srinagar (Kashmir) and died in Chondpura, Srinagar on 28th of May 1968. He remained in Kashmir throughout his life and never left it. Born in a respectable and esteemed family of Kashmir Pandits he took to spirituel pursuits from an early age and from 1925 onwards plunged headlong in the quest of self-realisation. Though he lived with his near relations he remained a celibate. He had read upto the middle standard and had a fair knowledge of English. He knew Sanskrit well and had mastery over Persian and Urdu. He spoke little and kept himself covered in a cloak of anonymity. Only those fortunate few who came in contact with him had glimpses of his greatness. It was only in the later phase of his life

that his fame began to spread and Sadhus and Saints from outside Kashmir visited him. But even then it was only a small gathering of devotees and aspirants who came to him. He shunned publicity and lived in close communion with unseen forces. He was compassionate to the needy and in distress and helped them and blessed them. He led a simple and austere life. His chelum was his constant companion.

It is very difficult to make a true assessment of spiritual giants. They have dimensions wholly different from men of the world, big or small, and it is not possible to measure their greatness by an ordinary yard stick. The great merit of Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar's book on Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji lies in its faithful and detailed recording of all that the author knew about Bhagwan Gopinath Ji and the information that he gathered about the great saint. The reader gets a narrative of Bhagwan Ji's life events, his habits and his spiritual efforts. It is not fully certain as to who was the Guru of Bhagwan Ji. Shri Fotedar while mentioning about the spiritual efforts of Bhagwan Ji is not in a position to say as to what precisely was the path followed by Bhagwanji which enabled him to reach the heights which he had attained. But there is enough factual material in the book to enable a practitioner in the path of the traditional Shiva Shakti worship which is prevalent among Kashmiri Padits, to draw inferences and conclusions about the mode of sadhana practiced by Bhagwanji.

It is necessary to mention briefly the religious beliefs and practices of the Kashmiri Pandits. They follow the tenets of Sanatan Dharma in common among the Hindus and worship the Supreme Being in His five aspects of Vishnu, Ganesh, Surya, Shiva and Devi. But their kuldevatas are the different forms of the Devi and they are worshippers of Shakti which includes Shiva as well. Every family has his Kul *Devi* which are generally Ragyan, Sharika, and *Jwala*, with their corresponding Bhairava

(Shiva). While the Devi is worshipped in the ordinary way some persons aspiring for higher reaches get initiated and then the path goes steep high. Side by side with the aforesaid traditional worship of the Devi is Shaiva Darshan, popularly known as Kashmir Shaivism, propounded and elaborated by a long line of great philosopher sages and sadhaks such as Shri Kanth, Vasu Gupta, Kallata, Somanand, Utpala, and to crown them all, the great Abhinava Gupta who was followed by Kshemraj and others. There is no other Savant and Scholar after the Adi Shankaracharya who is more honoured in the Hindu world than Abhinava Gupta. He is referred to as Mahamaheshwar and he moved across the Indian stage as an unrivalled colossus. The Trika system of Kashmir Shaivism in a way seeks to harmonise the Shaiva and Shakta philosophies. It adds to the concepts of the beginning and creation of the universe propounded by the Sankhya System. The Trika system has its practical side as well. It is a moot question as to how far the principles of the Trika system have been borrowed from Shakta practices or, conversely, to what extent the Shakta sadhana as prevalent in Kashmir and in parts of India, has been influenced by the Trika doctrines. The subject becomes relevant inorder to assess the spiritual heights attained by Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji.

The factual information contained in Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar's book clearly shows that Bhagwan Gopinath Ji began with the traditional worship of the Devi in Her different aspects such as Ragyan, Sharika and Jwala. The distinction between the Devis is only for the beginner. As the practitioner goes higher on the path the distinction disappears and he bows before the Divine mother, Jagadamba, in all Her aspects. The traditional Shakta upasana leads the practitioner to the point where every thing goes back and merges in the Devi and that includes Shiva as well. The sadhak becomes a Kaul, a paramhansa and according to the Tantras there is nothing beyond a Kaul. In the upper most reaches the sadhak pursuing the path of visualising and comprehending the reverse process in cos-

mic evolution seeks to go to the Ultimate Source of all, the Divine Lady, who is the Supreme Creatrix.

Is there anything beyond the Devi which can be subjected to ritual worship and which can come within the comprehension of a Kaul. It could be said that the traditional worship of the Devi by Kashmiri Pandits as also the Shakta practitioners in India and abroad can itself lead to the identification of the Sadhaka with the Supreme Being and no further climb is necessary. The Shaiva Darshan and Trika Shastra seem to suggest that there is a higher summit beyond the Devi Herself. The approach though highly abstruce is indicated with clarity. That may be regarded as the last hurdle before reaching the final goal and even Shakta Sadhaks have sometimes traversed the path indicated by Trika Shastra to achieve their objective. Did Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji too adopt such a course. In 1930 Bhagwanji shifted to the house of Pandit Tika Bayu at Rangteng (Srinagar) and stayed there for seven years. The factual record of what Bhagwanji did in this period is briefly given by the Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar in his book. It runs thus :

> "At this place he appears to have plunged headlong into intense Sadhana. He would be found lying on a bed, face towards the wall, with a small lamp burning in his room for 24 hours. His elder sister told me, that during this period, nobody was allowed to get into his room except her younger daughter Chanda Ji and a few other selected people. The room and Bhagwan Ji's bed were covered with layers of dust which he would not allow to be swept. Cob webs and spiders were also present in this room. During this period a rat had bored a hole in one of the heels of his foot which had been there for a long time. He would sometimes take handfuls of Datura (Stramonium) opium, panak and other introxicants in this period of intense Sadhana.

At times, Bhagwanji would vomit basinfuls of blood and his body was wholly swoollen and he looked like a ghoul. On one occasion during this period, his sister reminded him of the intense suffering which they were undergoing and suggested to him to take up a wordly life. His reply, firm and direct was "Our boat is in the midst of an ocean, either both of us will land safely or get drowned".

During this period he would fast for months together or sometimes take huge quantities of food. This tapasya lasted 7 years and he came out of this great ordeal, clairvoyant and clairaudient, with full vision of the past, present and future, a Siddha with a badly mauled body but a radiant soul..."

What was the nature of this sadhana. To pursue this line of enquiry it is necessary to mention some salient doctrines of the Trika system with respect to cosmic evolution. According to the Trika Shastra the universe is only an "expansion" of the Power of Param Shiva in His aspect as Shakti. The things and beings of the universe are built up by a few fundamental factors called the Tattwas. They are :

1- 5 The five Bhutas viz. Prithvi (Earth), Apan (Water), Agni (Fire), Vayu (Air) and Akash (Ether).

6-10 The fiive Karmendriyas viz. Upastha (Power or or capacity of recreation), Payu (Power of voiding or discarding). Pada (Power of locomation), Hasta (Power of handling) and Vak (Power of expression or voicing).

11-15 The five Tanamatras (general elements of sense perception) viz. Gandha (Odour), Rasa (flavour), Rupa (colour), Sparsha (touch) and Shabda (sound).

16-20 *The five Jananendriyas* (Five powers of sense perception) viz. Ghrahendriya, Rasendriya, Darshanendriya, Sparshendriya, and Shravanendriya.

21-23 Antahkaran (The three capacities of mental operation) viz. Mana, Ahankara and Buddhi.

and 24-25 Prakriti — the Root of all Feeling and Purush, the experiencer of these feelings as a limited individual.

The aforesaid 25 Tattwas are common in both the Sankhya and Trika systems with the difference that Sankhya emphasises that Purusha and Prakriti are final principles while in Trika they are only derivative and the Trika pursuing the analysis further treats the following as additional Tattwas : viz.

26-31 The six sheaths of the Purusha which are principles of Subjective Limitation and are collectively called the Kanchukas viz.

(i) Kala or Time (काल)

(ii) Niyati (Limitation in regard to presence);

(iii) Raga (राग) (Attachment);

(iv) Vidya (Knowledge);

(v) Kala (कला) Art of Creation;

(vi) Maya.

32-36 And lastly the five important Tattwas, viz. :

(i) Sad-vidya (True knowledge).

(ii) Aishvarya or Ishwar Tattwa (Lordliness).

(iii) Sadakhya or Sada Shiva Tattwa (that in which the experience of Being begins).

(iv) Shakti Tattwa (Principle of negation of universal experience).

and (v) Shiva Tattwa (Suppression in the Experiencer of all experience of objects and means of experiencing them.

It is the play of the abovementioned last five Tattvas which sets the wheel of creation in motion. The splendour and grandeur of the Cosmic drama of the beginning, evolution and dissolution of the Universe (Srishti) as visualised by the Kashmir Shaiva sages is enthralling.

Param Shiva, the Highest Reality, is the prime source of all universal manifestations. In the beginning there is nothing but Param Shiva. The manifested universe as an idea is within Him, because He is complete in Himself. The creative process begins with the desire to manifest and shining out, (Abhas). This is the first stirring in the Cosmic drama. At this stage the two Tattwas, the Shiva Tattwa and the Shakti Tattwa come simultaneously into operation. Param Shiva by the operation of Shiva Tattwa, the Anand aspect of His Shakti which acting as a force of negation, makes Him climb down from His supremely ideal self in which the unverse being all within Him there was, initially no desire of manifesting Himself and He is now gripped by the idea of Abhas. But as yet there is only a feeling of manifestation and no feeling of a universe in the experience. The Shakti Tattwa keeps the experience of universe in a state of suppression. Thus the Shiva Tattwa is the first ripple in the Cosmic process of Universal manifestation while the Shakti Tattwa acting as a principle of restraint checks and regulates it. In this stage Param Shiva has only the feeling of pure "I" because the feeling of universe in the experience is suppressed by the operation of Shakti Tattwa and the thought of "I am this or that" becomes dormant. The concept of manifested universe in all its minutest details was in the mind of Param Shiva but the operation of Shakti Tattwa, which is an aspect of His own self, puts him as if in a haze and He is only left with the desire to manifest but oblivious as to its form and shape.

The next scene opens with the operation of the Sadakhya Tattwa. The grip of Shakti Tattwa is slightly lessened by the Iccha aspect of the Divine Shakti and Param Shiva getting out of the haze in which he had been wrapped begins to regain the vision of the ideal universe in experience but the vision starts as a vague recollection and the full picture of Cosmic manifestation is still hazy. The thought "I" gets enlarged into "I am" but "what I am" is still a dim vision.

In the following scene of the drama, with the coming into force of the "Aishvarya Tattwa" the Jnan aspect of the Divine Shakti clears the mist and Param Shiva as the Divine Experiencer recaptures the vision of the Ideal universe in all its full glory. The thought "I am" becomes "I am this" after a full survey of manifested universe in the manner in which an architect gets the mental picture of a building to be constructed according to his own plan. At this stage the experience "I am this" is reshaped into "This am I".

The next scene commences with the impacts of the Kriya aspect of the Divine Shakti by the "Sad-Vidya" or "Shuddha Vidya" Tattwa. Now the Supreme Architect of the universe examines the concepts of "I" and "this" giving equal prominence to both and looks into them as both identified as also separate in thought. There is unity as every thing emanates from Param-Shiva but what the creation leads to, is diversity in the objects of creation. With His gaze fixed to the manifestation to come with all its diversities there is experience of diversity-in-unity-and-identity. The divine Experiencer surveying the manifested universe to come with all its multifariousness sees it as part of Him and proceeding from Him as the Creator of all forms of creation. The Act in the Cosmic drama which follows the impact of Sad Vidya Tattwa depicts the start and flow of the creative process of manifestation which uptil now was only a plan in Divine contemplation. The process of implementation of the plan now starts.

In the "Sad Vidya" or "Shuddha Vidya" state the Supreme Architect of the universe had visualised the manifestation of universe as an ideal one. But, as a result of all the mental efforts and phases of dimness, slumber, and awakening to which He had subjected Himself by the operation of His own Divine Shakti in Her different aspects He, as if feeling tired, finds Himself in the grip of Maya who almost put Him to sleep and the concept of universal. "All this" again gets dim and He only remains conscious of the picture of manifested universe as something vague and indistinct almost amounting to nothing. The five Kanchukas now come into operation by the obscuring force of Maya and He is wrapped by the limitations of Kal, Niyati, Rag, Vidya and Kala. The Experiencer in this state is called Purusha or the limited individual spirit which affected by the other Tattwas produces innumerable individual spirits, also called Purushas. Simultaneously with the Pursha comes into existence Prakriti who acts and reacts on the Purush reminding him of His full glory which the obscuring force of Maya has dimmed. With the process of multiplicity of the All Highest, innumerable Purushas and Prakritis come into being. The Trika Shastra however makes it emphatically clear that even by producing unlimited Purshas and Prakritis of individual spirits He only changes the character of His Experience by Himself becoming the experience of all the Purushas with their mutually exclusive and distinct realisations at different levels but He remains the same as He is in Eternity. The sleeping, drowsy and waking stages are just part of play by the Actor in the Cosmic drama. The Actor remains what He is irrespective of the part He plays in the divine drama. The universe with all its innumerable varieties, objects, and experiences is only a manifestation of the Shakti of Puram Shiva Himself which is only a part of Him and in no way different from Him. The five main aspects of this Shakti are Chit, Anand, Iccha, Jnana, and Kriya. When Shakti opens Herself the universe is born and when she closes Herself there is dissolution of the universe and the divine manifestation comes to an end. But this drama of

opening and closing continues and will go on with countless universes coming into existence and then disappearing. The Trika again emphasises that Shakti is only an aspect of Param Shiva by which He pervades the universe while He himself remains unaffected by His own ever continuing manifestations.

The concepts of Shakti, Purush and Prakriti as elaborated in the Trika Shastra are somewhat different from those who worship Shakti and this includes the Shiva Shakti worship in Kashmir. The border line between the two approaches, howsoever, shadowy and thin, does exist. The Shakta approach follows in general the Sankhya line. Brahma (ब्रह्म) in His unmanifested state is silent. There is nothing beyond Him and every thing is within Him. Then comes the desire to manifest and The Supreme One assumes the character of two even though the two is outwardly one just like a gram within whose outward covering there are two pieces. The two thus produced are Purush and Prakriti. Purush is in a state of rest and provides the matter base for Prakriti's operations as Supreme Energy. Purusha is Shiva and Prakriti the Divine Mother and even though they are united to each other as sound and word and word and its meaning. Shiva remains in a state of repose. The Devi, the Divine Mother creates, preserves and dissolves the universes. The infinite number of Purushas and Prakritis is not so emphasised in Shakta philosophy as the Trika does even though every individual being is a part of The Mula Purusha (मूल पुरुष) and the Devi. The Kaul Shastra puts Her on the loftiest pedestal.

> Brahma in his hymn to the Devi in Ratri Sukta addresses Her as Vishveshwari, Jagatdhatri and the cause of all creation preservation and dissolution —

She is Parmeshwari to whom the gods have prayed and before Her all have bowed.

Ragyan, In Her Sahsranama, has been described as (समस्त तत्व निलया) (In whom all Tattwas merge) and जगद्राज्ञी (Queen of the Universe), (तत्वराज्ञी) (Queen of Tattwas); वाग्राज्ञी (Queen of Sounds); and तत्वरूपिणी (Possessing the form of Tattwas.

In Ragyan Stotra it is said :

अज्ञात संभवमना कलितान्ववायं, भिक्षुं कपलिनमवाससमद्वितीयम्
पूर्वं करग्रहण मंगलतो भवत्याः, शम्भुं कएवबुबुधे गिरिराज कन्ये ॥
चर्माम्वरं च शवभस्म विलेपनं च, भिक्षाटमं च नटनं च परेत भूमौ ।
वेताल संहति परिग्रहताच्च शंभु : शोभां बिभर्ति गिरिजे तव साहचर्यात्

Daughter of Himalayas! You alone knew Shambhu whose origin is unknown, who remains unclad and is a Bhikshu holding a skull, before you married Him;

Girija! It is because of your taking Him as your spouse that Shiva, who remains smeared with the ashes of the dead, who roams as a mendicant, and who dances in places of cremation has became lustrous.

As the Trika Shastra deals with Shiva, Shakti and Nara (Individual) similarly the Shakta philosophy deals with Purush, Prakriti and Jiva. The final goal in, Sadhana is the merger of the Jiva or Nara with Brahma or Param Shiva. The aforesaid three stand as three points of a triangle and the individual Nara or Jiva strives to Shorten the length of the sides of the traingle so that ultimately the triangle is reduced to a point the "Bindu" in which Shiva, Shakti or Nara, or Purush, Prakriti and Jiva, are all absorbed. This is the reverse process after the flowering of the universe, the Srishti, and the Tattvas moving backwards merge in the source from which they emanate. It is given to few to reach the final goal during their life time. For those who do reach the top of the Everest there is no further climb. For the Sadhak in different categories

the process of ascent consists in reducing the area of the traingle and decreasing the length of its sides and their progress can be assessed, where such assessment is possible, by measuring their distance from Shiva and Shakti or Purush and Prakriti.

There are four systems indicated in the Trika Shastra viz. Pratyabijanya (प्रत्याभिज्ञा) Kula, Spanda and Krama. Trika points to three paths by which an individual merges into Param Shiva. They are :

Anuvopaya, Shaktopaya and Shambhavopaya.

(i) The four methods of Sadhana indicated in Anuvopa viz. Ucchara (उच्चार) Karan (करणा), Dhyan (ध्यान) and Sthana Kalpana (स्थान कल्पना) are drawn from the Krama system and are connected with Kundalini Yoga.

(ii) Shaktopaya prescribes thought concentration. In this method recitation of mantras or breath control is not necessary. All thoughts other than the feeling of identity with Param Shiva have to be excluded.

(iii) Shambhavopaya (शांभदीपाय) is a form of Yogic practice in which the mind has to be kept free from all thoughts. It is indicated by the *Kula* system

Spanda is a system of meditation and *Pratyabhigyan* shows the path for self realisation and reunion with universal consciousness.

I cannot claim familiarity with the practical side of the different modes of Sadhana prescribed by the Trika Shastra because I have only followed to some extent, the path indicated by the Kaulmat (कौलमत्) or Shambhavi Vidya (worship of Shiva-Shakti) which is prevalent among the Kashmiri Pandits as also in a section of Hindus in general throughout India and in foreign countries. The

worship of Ragyan, Sharika, or Jwala, or of the Devi in any of Her different aspects consists, after graded initiations culiminating in Purna-Abhiseka, in recitation (Japa) of the mantras and invoking Her in Yantra and performing the necessary rituals. Worship in the Yantra is either performed singly or in a group. Individual worship is of two kinds viz Antaryag and Bahiryag. In Antaryag (अन्तर्याग) the entire worship is contemplative and no articles which are generally used in worship are required. The practitioner performs Bhut Shuddhi (भूतशुद्धि). The five elements e.g. Prithvi (Earth) Apan (Water), Agni (Fire),, Vayu (Air) and Akash (Ether) are collectively called Bhutas. The subtle centre in the base of the spine is called Muladhar Chakra. The Kundalini lies there coiled in a dormant state. The Kundalini is roused by the force of mantra Shakti and thus awakened she moves up passing through the upper chakras which are the centres of other Tattwas. Passing through Swadhishthan, Manipur, Anahat, Vishuddha and Agyan chakras she reaches the Sahasrar chakra and is united there with Shiva. Kaul practitioners, generally speaking, rouse the Kundalini by mantra yoga. It is also done by the process of Hatha Yoga. In chakra-archan or chakra puja which is performed collectively by a group of practitioners, the worship of the Devi is performed in Her Yantra which, in formation of triangles, circles, and rectangles, with the Bindu, the point, in the centre, symbolises the cosmos. It is a very powerful and potent form of Sadhana and its power and effectiveness depends on the spiritual stature of the chakreshwar who conducts the rites and the level of thought concentration and vibrations of mantra shakti released by the persons present. The Devi is invoked and the vibrations go round in a circle in which formation the participants in the rite sit. There are no speed breakers in a circle as there are in a rectangle and the imagery of thoughts produces the mental picture of the Srishti in its reverse and enveloping movement. One by one the Sheaths in which the Tattwas have woven the universe are

dissolved till the Central point is reached, which symbolises the beginning of creation and the practitioners get an awarness of the Devi. The same process is gone into when worship in yantra is performed alone. If properly performed by highly adept practitioners this form of worship in which mantra shakti, thought force and magnetic power of the practitioners come into play the result can be *Jagrit Samadhi* or *Samadhi* in a state of wakefulness. After continued practice the need of any outside aid with Yantra is not required and a practitioner can reach a similar stage by mental process.

The question is what is the ultimate stage of consciousness reached by the practitioner either when the Kundalini moving through the different centres in the *Sushumma* reaches the *Sahsrar* or when he visualises the nature of the central point, the Bindu, in a Yantra. It may be the stage when both, Shiva and Shakti and also the practitioner merge into one or the stage when Param Shiva is gripped by the power of His own Shakti and the latter assumes the role of the Divine Creatrix. More likely it is the latter stage which is attained even by highly adept sadhaks. In such a stage there is still some quantum of distance left between the three points of the triangle in which Purush, Prakriti and Jiva stand. The last plunge is taken, by the adepts, as if to break the atom itself, to realise the state of Param Shiva freed from the wrappings of the Devi. As mentioned above the achievement of such a state of consciousness may be possible by practicing Kundalini Yoga or the abovementioned shakta rites but some adept sadhaks have taken resort to some other highly specialised form of practice, in addition to the aforesaid practices, for attaining their objective. What can that be? Did Bhagwan Gopinath Ji practice any such form of specialised sadhana? what was the nature of the sadhana performed by him during his stay at Rangteng (Srinagar). From the account given by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar it might have been Kundalini Yoga or even some form of Aghora (अघोर) sadhana-or perhaps both.

Some highly adept Shakta sadhaks have taken resort to Aghora sadhana to attain the stage when the sakal Brahma (सकल ब्रह्म) is freed from the overpowering pull of shakti or Devi and She is absorbed in Him. According to Shaiva Darshan the Tantras have come from the five mouths of Param Shiva viz. Ishan, Tatpurush, Sadyojat, *Vamdeva* and *Aghora* (ईशान, तत्पुरुष, सद्योजात. वामदेव, अघोर) From *Aghora* mouth have come the following Tantras viz.

(i) Vijaya (विजय)
(ii) Vishvas (विश्वास)
(iii) Swayambhuva (स्वयंभुव)
(iv) Anala (अनल)
(v) Vira (वीर)

Is there any special method prescribed by this set of Tantras which can enable an adept practitioner to break the shackles of Devi Herself and attain the highest stage of Param Shiva. I am not competent to answer this question. There are frequent references in Pt. Shanker Nath Fotedar's book about Bhagwan Gopinath Ji's emphasis on *Nirakar Upasana.* He described the stage of his own spiritual development in the words of verse 6 of chapter XV of the Gita where Lord Krishna Says:-

> "The Sun does not illumine it nor the moon nor Fire. That is my supreme stage reaching which one does not return".

It appears that Bhagwan Gopinath Ji had reached the highest stage that is possible for a man to attain in his life. How did Bhagwanji climb up to the summit. There are only three persons in Kashmir at present who can throw some light on this querry. The first of this Triumvirate is the well known great sadhak and expounder of Kashmir Shaivism-Swami Lakshmanjoo. The other two are followers of the traditinal Shiva-Shakti upasana (or Shakta upasana in Kashmir. One of them is Pandit Shridhar

Joo Dhar. He is the greatest living Shakta sadhak in Kashmir but he keeps himself away from the footlights. I have often requsted him to break the rule of *gopiniyam* (Secrecy) and intiate competent men and women of younger generation in the path of their ancestors as the light of Kaulmarg is getting dim in Kashmir which in former days led the country on this path. The third of the trio is Pandit Tika Lal Khazanchi. I heard about his eminence during my recent stay at Srinagar in last October but was unable to meet him.

Shri Swami Lakshman Joo, Pandit Shridhar Joo Dhar and Pandit Tika Lal Khazanchi form the galaxy of the great in present day Kashmir. They alone can clear the mist regarding Bhagwan Gopinath Ji's spiritual efiorts.

Sd/ Shiva Nath Katju

Copy of letter dated 19th April 1976 from Mr. Justice Shivnath Katju, to Shri Swami Lachman Joo, Shaiva Philosopher, Nishatbagh, Srinagar (Kashmir).

Revered Swamiji,

I had the honour of meeting you during my stay at Srinagar in October last but I deeply regret that I met you only once and that too for a short time. Although I learnt much during our brief conversation I wish I had time to seek further clarification of certain points which I will mention in this letter. Eversince my return back to Allahabad from Srinagar I have been thinking of writing to you but was prevented from doing so by my other preoccupations.

While in Srinagar I felt a strong pull towards the late Bhagwan Gopi Nath Ji and frequently visited what is now called Bhagwan Ji's Ashram, in Kharyar, Habbakadal. The biography of Bhagwan Gopinath Ji which has been very ably written by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar gives a fairly accurate narrative of Bhagwanji's life and what is known about his Sadhana. But it leaves many things unsaid, for the simple reason that what is not stated in the biography is not known. After reading the biography 1 sent a letter to the Secretary of Bhagwan Gopi Nathji Trust and later wrote a Review on the book but in view of its length and contents the Review has assumed the shape of an essay. I am herewith enclosing copies of my aforesaid letter to the Secretary of the Trust and my Review on the book so that, I may not have to repeat what I have stated in my letter and the Review.

The question arises as to the approach of Kashmiri Pandits in particular and Shakta Sadhaks in general to-

wards Kashmir Shaivism and the Trika system. Have they only an academic interest for the former, because the practical sadhana of Kashmiri Pandits indicated by the worship of Ragyan, Sharika or Jwala runs it own well defined and fully laid out course, or the aforesaid Shakti worship is influenced by Trika doctrines. The Kashmiri Pandits follow the Shrutis and are shraut karmis. They are Saraswats of Kath Shakha, their veda is Krishna Yajurveda and their Grihysutra is Langhakshi. Among the Panch Devas viz., Vishnu, Ganesh, Surya, Shiva and Devi, the Kuldevata of Kashmir Pandits is the Devi, and the Kashmir Pandits follow the Shakta Agams. There are two broad divisions in Shakti worship viz. Kali Kul and Shri Kul. The Ten Mahavidyas with their different aspects come within any of these two categories. Ragyan comes in Shrikul and Sharika and Jwala in Kali Kul. The principal Agam for Shri Kul is the Kularnava Tantra and for the Kalikul is the Mahanirvana Tantra. There are several other existing Shakta Agams which also deal with the practical forms of the Sadhana of the ten Mahavidiyas and this is further elaborated in the commentaries thereon. One of the most exhaustive of such commentaries is the Shri Vidyarnava Tantra by Shri Swami Vidya Aranya who was the first Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Vijayanagar and later became a Shankaracharya of the Shringeri Math. Shri Vidyarnava Tantra was published for the first time in two bulky volumes by the Research Department of Jammu & Kashmir State during the regime of Maharaja Pratap Singh. The "Devi Rahasya" also published by the Jammu and Kashmir Research Department gives the Paddhatis, though not in full, of Ragyan, Sharika and Jwala together with their Kavach, Stotra, and "Sahasranamas". The Paddhatis also indicates the form of the Yantras of the Devis and the mode of Yantra Puja.

It may be emphasised at the outset that the pattern of worship of the Devi is the same for the Shaktas throughout India or whereever they may be, as among the Kashmiri Pandits who are initiates. The rituals with regard to puri-

fication viz. Sthan Shodhan, Bhutsuddhi, Atma Shodhan, Tattwa Shodhan and Dravya Shadhan are common and so also the different forms of Nyas, including Shadang Nyas, Kar Nyas and Matrika Nyas, the variations being in accordance with the difference in the forms of the mantra of the Devi of the initiate. The rites connected with the worship of Yantras are also common. In chakra-archan the Yantra worshipped may be either of Ragyan, Sharika or Jwala but initiates in the mantra of any of the aforesaid Devis can participate and when Nyas or Japa of the mantra of the Devi is done the individual participants recite their own mul-mantra and perform Nyasa in the same way although the Aksharas may vary in accordance with their own Paddhatis. In the Avarana (आवरण) puja of the yantra when done according to the Samhar krama (संहारक्रम) the enveloping movement of the Srishti is visualised and step by step the Sadhaks close into the primal source of creation — the Divine Creatrix — represented in the Bindu which is Her seat in the yantra. To what extent an individual Sadhak feels his nearness to the summit depends upon the spiritual level attained by him. The course of Sadhana is complete by itself.

It is necessary to point out that all the thirty six Tattwas, in addition to the twenty five mentioned by the Sankhya system, which are recognised by the Trika viz., the five kanchukas, (Maya, Shuddha Vidya, Aishwarya, Sadakhya, Shakti Tattwa and Shiva Tattwa) and eleven others are all to be found in the Shakta system. In fact the latter goes farther and mentions a thirty seventh Tattwa viz., Samvid. In the worship of Ragyan Achman are taken for purifying the body by saying :

आत्मतत्त्वं शोधियामि स्वाहा, विद्यातत्त्वं शोधियामि स्वाहा;
शिव तत्त्वं शोधियामि स्वाहा ।

In matrika Nyas the process runs as follows :

षडंडगन्यास :- ऊ आत्म तत्त्वाय हृदयाय नमः

ह्रीं विद्या तत्त्वाय शिरसे ०

श्री शिव ,, शिखायै ०

रां शक्ति ,, कवचाय ०

क्लीं शिव ,, नेत्रेभ्यो ०

सौ. शिवि तत्त्वाय अस्त्राय फट् ॥

The Tatwa Shuddhi rite covers all the thirty six Tattwas. The Tattwa Shuddhi rite in the same manner as set out above is performed not only in the worship of Sharika and Jwala but also in the worship of Shri Yantra, called the Shri Chakra, as also of the Yantras of the other Mahavidyas by the Shakta practitioners all over the country.

It may be mentioned that in matrika Nyas the order of Sanskrit alphabets are in their ordinary sequence called *anuloma* and sometimes in the converse order called *Viloma* but the arrangement of the alphabets is not made in a disturbed way as is done in Uttarmalini, Again in the Vandana (वन्दना) in the course of Chakra-archan the *Ahutis* given in their respective order are :

ॐ आत्म तत्त्वं शोधियामि स्वाहा, ॐ विश्वा तत्त्वं शोधियामि स्वाहा;
ॐ शिव तत्त्वं ,, ,, ॐ प्रकृति ,, ,, ,,
ॐ पुरुष ,, ,, ,, ॐ मनस्तत्त्वं ,, ,,
ॐ बुद्धि ,, ,, ,, ॐ अहंकार ,, ,,
ॐ शक्ति ,. ,, ,, ॐ भैरव ,, ,,
ॐ सर्व ,, ,, ,, ॥

It would thus appear that the eleven Tattwas, in addition to the twenty five mentioned in the Sankhya, which have been recognised by the Trika are all to be found in the Shakta system and are dealt with in the course of the performance of Shakta rites not only in Kashmir but throughout India.

The Shri Yantra or the Shri Chakra is installed in all the four Maths established by the Adi Shankaracharya viz.,

Jyotir Math in the North, Shringeri in the South, Govardhan (Puri) in the East and Sharda (Dwarka) in the West and also in the fifth at Kanchi. After establishing the aforesaid four Maths the Adi Shankaracharya retired to Kanchi where he lived in the closing phase of his life and the Math at Kanchi is the fifth Math representing Urdhva-Amnaya founded by Adi Shankarcharya. The worship of the Shri Yantra in all the aforesaid five maths is performed in accordance with the rituals prescribed in the Parashuram-Kalpa Sutra which is followed by all Shakta practitioners who are initiates.

There is great divergence of view with regard to the date of birth of the Adi Shankarcharya. According to the Parampara of the Shringeri math he was born in 740 A.D. while according to the Kanchi math history the year of birth is said to be 509 B.C. The Kanchi parampara is supported by the Govardhan and Sharda paramparas. Unfortunately all the records of the Jyotir math (at Joshimath near Badrinath) were lost when the math itself ceased to exist for over two hundred years. It was revived about forty years back with Swami Brahmanand Saraswati as its Shankarcharya who was the Guru of the now famous Swami Karpatriji Maharaj. The present Shankarcharya of Kanchi Math, who is sixty eighth in line of spiritual descent from the Adi Shankaracharya, is Jagatguru Shri Chandra Shekhar Saraswati Maharaj who assumed his august office in 1908. The Kanchi records give the chronological table of all the Shankaracharyas of Kanchi Math beginning from the Adi Shankaracharya together with their names and dates of assumption of office by them. In spiritual descent, on an average, there are usually three holders of the office in a century. Very often a holder of office takes a boy disciple in the later period of his life and the successor if he does not meet a premature death may continue in the seat of his office for a long span of years. Among the Shankaracharyas of Kanchi math as many as 11 Shankaracharyas including the present one have held their office for more than sixty years. Out of them the se-

cond Shankaracharya presided over the Math for 70 years, the fourth for 96 years, the sixth for 81 years, the eigth for 83 years, the fifty third for 81 years. The present Shankaracharya has been holding his office for over 68 years.

The Kanchi parampara also finds support from the history of the Gaudpadacharya math or Kaivalya math — now called the Kavie math of the Saraswat Brahmins. It was founded by Swami Vivaranand Saraswati at about the same time when the Adi Shankaracharya founded his five maths. Shri Govinacharya was the disciple of Shri Gaudpadacharya and the former was the Guru of the Adi Shankaracharya and also of Swami Vivaranand. The Kavle math has its headquarters near the city of Goa and the present head of the math is seventy sixth in line of descent from Swami Vivaranand Saraswati. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Kanchi records which give the date of birth of Shri Shankar (Adi Shankaracharya) as 2593 year of Kaliyuga era which corresponds to 509 B.C. This finds ample support from the some Jain compositions and also from the date of Shri Shankar's birth given in the "Brihat Shankar Vijaya" by Shri Chitsukhacharya who was also a disciple of the Adi Shankaracharya. It would appear that the maths founded by the Adi Shankarcharya and the Kavle math are the oldest monastic institutions in India. The antiquity of the Parashuram Kalpa Sutra is older and goes beyond 509 B.C. the date of Adi Shankarcharya's birth. It can be safely assumed that the worship of the Shri Yantra in the maths founded by the Adi Shankarcharya in the same way as it is performed now, began from the time of the Adi Shankaracharya himself if not earlier and the antiquity of the present forms of Shakta worship goes back to at least 500 B.C.

The concept of thirty six Tattwas was developed and explained by Shaiva sages of Kashmir which in grandeur and sublimity has hardly any rival.

Sir John Woodroffe says:

> "Unsurpassed for its profound analysis is the account of the thirty six Tattwas or stages of cosmic Evolution (accepted by both Shaivas and Shaktas) given by the Northern Shaiva School of the Agama. . . ."

The concept of the thirty six tattawas is mentioned and elaborated in Shaiva Agamas as also in Shakta Agama and it is not necessary to go into the question as to which were prior in time. The fact remains that the Shakta School and the Shaiva School are allied and have several common features. Sir John Woodroffe has rightly observed: —

> "In fact Shakta literature is in parts unintelligible to one unacquainted with some features of what is called the Shaiva Darshan."

As a matter of fact the line of distinction between a Shaiva and a Shakta is very thin and one who worships one necessarily worships the other. Shaivas may be said to be those who predominately worship Shiva while the Shaktas worship predominately the Devi. But in the last resort Shiva is also the Devi and Devi also Shiva. The All-Experiencer is both He and She. He is the static aspect of the Consciousness while Shakti is the Kinetic aspect of the same.

I now come to the question raised by me. The Kashmiri Pandits are the only surviving Hindus of the valley. Tradition and history say that we are all descendants of eleven Brahmin families who were left after the mass conversion of Hindus into the fold of Islam. It is likely that prior to this conversion the Hindus of Kashmir had votaries of other Panch Devas besides Shakti. I have not checked but in Raj Tarangini there may be reference to Shaivas in Kashmir. It appears that the eleven families from whom all the Kashmiri Pandits have descended

malmasis and *Bhan Masis* were all Shaktas. At least I do not know of any family of Kashmiri Pandits settled in India whose Kul Devi is not either Ragyan, Sharika or Jwala and I pressume the position is the same in Kashmir. If this is so the line of Sadhana for a Kashmiri Shakta is clearly laid down in the paddhatis of his Kul Devi and he has to follow it. For him to give up the path of his ancestors and adopt a different course of Sadhana would amount to deviation from his Kul Dharma. A Shaiva from any part of the country such as a Vir Shaiva, a Lingayat or a follower of Shaiva Siddhant may straight away start on the practical course prescribed by the Trika. The Malini Vijayottar Tantra which has been described by the great Abhinava Gupta as the essence of the Trika system lays the base of Sadhana on the Uttarmalini while the Swacchand Tantra emphasises the Purva Malini. We, who are Shaktas are familiar in the course of our practical sadhana with only Purva malini but that too while performing Nyas and the Tattwa Shuddhi rites. But for us the base of the sadhana is the worship of our respective Kul Devi. I do not think, and I say so subject to correction because I have no knowledge of the practical aspects of the Trika, the Malini Vijaya or the Swacchand Tantra deal with the worship of any of our Kul Devis. It follows that a Kashmiri Pandit has to adopt the course of Shakta Sadhana prescribed for him and has to start with the worship of his Kul Devi. As he moves on and climbs higher he may find the Trika philosophy of help to him in providing the explanations and rationale of the different steps in the sadhana performed by him. It is further likely that some individual Guru paramparas of Kashmiri Pandit initiates include some aspects of Sadhana indicated by the Trika system in addition to or supplementing the prescribed course of Shakti sadhana. But in any case a Kashmiri pandit when he enters the spiritual field has to follow his own Kul Sadhana of Ragyan, Sharika or Jwala and not any other that is indicated by the Trika system. I respectfully ask you whether I am right in saying so.

There is widespread apathy and ignorance, not only among the Kashmir Pandits but among the intelligensia in general all over the country, of our Shastric teachings and particularly of the Tantras, Shaiva or Shakta. It seems to have become a fashion to ridicule rites and rituals without caring to understand what they mean and stand for. I can do no better than quote what the late Sir John Woodroffe has said:—

> "Ritual is an art, the art of religion. Art is the outward material expression of ideas intellectually held and emotionally felt. Ritual art is concerned with the expression of those ideas and feelings which are specifically called religious. It is a mode by which religious truth is presented, and made intelligible in material forms and symbols to the mind .... It is the means by which the mind is transformed and purified. In particular according to Indian principles it is the instrument whereby the consciousness of the worshipper (Sadhaka) is shaped in actual fact into forms of experience which embody the truth which scripture teaches. The Shakta is thus taught that he is one with Shiva and His power of Shakti. This is not a matter of mere argument, it is a matter for experience. It is ritual and Yoga-practice which secure that experience for him. How profound Indian ritual is will be admitted by those who have understood the general principles of all ritual and symbolism, and have studied it in its Indian form with a knowledge of the principles of which it is an expression. Those who speak of "mummery' "gibberish", and "superstition," betray both their incapacity and ignorance"

Sir John Woodroffe in his authoritative book "Shakti and Shakta" has given the translation of a letter written to him in Bengali by his great Guru, Pandit Shiva Chandra Vidyarnava, shortly before his death in near about 1915. Some extracts from the letter run thus :

"At the present time the general public are ignorant of the principles of the Tantra Shastra....... when I commenced to write "Tantratattwa" some 25 years ago (some 37 years from date) Bengali Society was in a perilous state owing to the influx of other religions, want of faith and a spirit of disputation. Shortly before this a number of English books had appeared on the Tantra Shastra which, whilst ignorant of Dharma, Sadhana and Siddhi, contained some hideous and outrageous pictures drawn by the Bengali historians and novelists ignorant of and unfaithful to the Shastric principles. The English books by English writers contained merely a reflection of what English educated Bengalis of those days had written. Both are even today ignorant of the Tantra Shastra."

What Pandit Shiva Chandra Vidyarnava said about the approach of the Bengalis towards the Tantra Shastra about sixty years back applies with equal, if not greater force to the present generation of Indians including the Kashmiri Pandits. If the latter forget and discard their heritage they will themselves suffer but the light of knowledge (vidya) which is implicit in the heritage will not be extinguished. It will pass on to those who are more competent to handle it irrespective of the fact that they have no special links with Kashmir. But perhaps even now the tide may turn.

I now come to another question. What is the particular form of Sadhana or Yogic practice indicated by the Trika System or the Shakta system or by both which leads to the stage of realisation where Shiva and the Devi merge into one in the full totality of Param Shiva

In the Shakta Sadhana the ultimate stage in ritual worship is reached in a Yantra's Bindu. It is in the last sheath, (Avarana) covering Shiva Shakti in the process of Srishti's dissolution and the first in the dawn of cosmic evolution. The Bindu is located at the centre of the first

triangle in a Yantra. It may symbolise the Param Shiva stage, the stage of Shiva-Shakti or even the stage when the Devi assumes the dominent role in Creation.

In the worship of Ragyan the Bindu is worshipped in the following way:—

मूल ॰ श्री भूतेश्वरी श्री पादुकां पूजायामि नमः तर्पयामि नमः
,,,, श्री महारज्ञी भगवती श्री पादुकां पूजयामि नमः ,, ,,
— — — — — — — — —
ऊ मूलं श्री भूतेश्वर भूतेश्वरी श्री पादुकां पूजयामि नमः तर्पयामि नमः

Thus the summit reached in the thought process while worshipping in the Bindu is the stage when the one becomes two in the shape of Shiva and Shakti even though the two are merely aspects of the Supreme one.

Similarly in Shriyantra the Bindu in the mahatrikona, the first triangle in the middle of the Yantra, is the seat of Lalita Mahasundari and She is addressed thus:

कामेश्वर सहितायै श्री ललिता महासुन्दरी परा भहारिकायै नम।

It can be said that a Sadhak in the worship of a Yantra goes up to the stage where a single grain of gram (chana) symbolising Sakal Brahma or Param Shiva in union with His Shakti, who is His Creative or Feminine aspect, appears as two seeds when the grain's outer covering is removed, and the Devi in Her role as Parmeshwari and Creatrix of the universe almost over shadows Shiva. The average Shakta Sadhak thinks of Her and bows before Her and this for him, is the goal. The Bindu while it symbolises SHIVA-SHAKTI in Their dual aspects cannot be the sure focal point for the contemplation of Param Shiva whose Shakti is within Him and there is nothing besides Him.

The concept of the Bindu may be further analysed. It is a point which symbolises the collapse or dissolution (Pralaya) of the Srishti (universe) and it is also the point where it begins again. It may be regarded objectively as

a mathematical point which has no magnitude. The inner circle of the point is surrounded by a Line which being in touch with the inner core or surface conjuctively make the Bindu. Its constituent colours are white and red, the white point Chandra (moon) represents Shiva, while the red point is the Devi. Sir John Woodroffe says:—

> "What then is meant by these symbols of the Point and Line. It is said that the Supreme Shiva sees Himself in and as His own power or Shakti. He is the "White Point" or "moon" (Chandra) which is illumination and in the completed process the "I" (Aham) side of the experience, She is the "Red Point". Both colours are seen in the microcosmic generation of the child. Red too is the colour of Desire. She is "Fire" which is the object of experience of "This" (I dam) the objective side of experience. The "This" here is nothing but a mass of Shiva's own illuminating rays. These are reflected in Himself as Shakti. who in the Kamakalavilasa is also called the "Pure minor" of Shiva". .... Since Bindu is the point from which the world after dissolution comes forth again "It is called a condensed or massive form of Shakti. It is the tense State of Power immediately after the first actualisation".

The Bindu indicates the starting point of Creation as also the ultimate point in its dissolution. Notionally it symbolises the beginning and also the end of creation both being the play of Shiva and His Shakti. But here the process of manifestation has started. The concept of universe which is initially in the mind of the Creator prior to the stage of manifestation has now, as the Bindu indicates, been given a concrete reality by setting the creative wheel into motion by Shiva's Shakti. To pursue the analogy of a grain of gram, the outer cover of the grain having gone the One has split into Two and the cosmic play starts or ends to begin again with the mutual pulls of Shiva and Shakti. The Bindu therefore, while it may include by

stretching imagination the Absolute (Param Shiva) at the stage when there is nothing apart from Him and everything is within Him, does not exclusively indicate the Absolute, prior to the start of the creative process. It more pointedly symbolises the later stage when the Absolute splitting into two- Shiva and Shakti, start the process of manifestation.

What therefore could be above the Bindu where Shiva and Shakti are completely merged into one. That is the state of Mahapralaya when every thing having been dissolved goes back to its original source- Param Shiva. In that stage He cannot be seen because there is no one to see Him or bow to his Majesty and certainly He is beyond any ritual worship. In the unlimited range of a Yogi's mind He can come within the ambit of contemplation. To contemplate this Absolute stage a Yantra with the Bindu is not enough. The Bindu does contain an idea of the start and end of the creative process and is indicative of the stage when creation from merely being an idea in the mind of the Creator has assumed a concrete shape. No Yantra, circle, triangle, or Bindu can therefore adequately symbolise the absolute void and blankness that exists when manifestation itself remains merely an idea in the mind of Param Shiva. The Sanskrit word "Shunya" is the only word that could be used to express nothingness. An Artist's canvas while portraying this stage of "total Nothing" except Him would remain blank-may be with a background showing absolute void, if there could be any such background. He in that stage is beyond any portrayal because not even the gods know Him in His aspect as Param Shiva. There is nothing apart from Param Shiva-not even gods, and even His Shakti who later wraps Him, is Herself wrapped within Him.

It is the glory of the Shakta Sadhana, and this is equally true of the Trika system, that it takes the Sadhak to the higest point which is humanly possible to reach in his quest of the unknown. In course of his Sadhana which at

this stage rises above the usual rituals and assumes a contemplative aspect he attempts to bring the concept of Param Shiva, even when there is nothing but the great void (Shunya) around Him, within his mental range.

It is prohibited to reveal the name of one's Guru or the mantra in which one is initiated. The injunctions are further strict about speaking of the details of successive grades in initiation culminating in full initiation (Purunabhisheka). It is sufficient in the context of this discussion to say that in Purnabhisheka a Shakta Sadhak is instructed in the knowledge of *Aghora* and *Paravidya*

In the climb to the highest summit the Devi is seen as gradually withdrawing Herself from Her play (Lila) and merging Herself into the prime source from where She has emerged. Unlike the earlier stages in the Sadhana where the Sadhak sees Her in Her dazzling cosmic play the focus of attention now turns more and more towards Shiva. In Aghora and Para (परा) the Sadhak's thoughts are directed towards Param Shiva.

There can be no Yantra of Para and so also of Aghora. They touch the stage of Maha Shunya (great void or emptiness) and cannot be subjected to any symbolic representation. When there is no universe or its idea in action the stage goes beyond the range of a Yantra. A mantra is the subtle body of the devata. The mantras of Aghor and Para become the only means for bringing the concepts of Aghora and Para within the mental ranges of the Sadhak. Their respective dhyan (ध्यान) helps the Sadhak in this process. I need not mention, the dhyan of Aghor.

The dhyan of Para goes to the loftiest peak and attempts to portray Param Shiva with vividhness as the Supreme One who is both He and She and who is in a state of repose. In the Dhyan there is a gradual rise in thought from the notion of *Sakal Brahma* to the ultimate stage of *Nishkal Brahma.* The last three lines of the Dhyan, and particularly the last, are of deepest significance.

The Dhyan of *Para* is part of the most hidden doctrine of the Shaktas and is revealed only to the full initiates. I am venturing to quote some lines of the Dhyan:

अमृतार्णव–मध्योद्यत–मारीद्वीपे मनोरमे,
कल्पवृक्ष–वनान्तःस्थे नवमाणिक्य मण्डपे ।
नवरत्नमयं श्रीमत् सिंहासन सुशोभनम् ,
त्रिकोणान्तः समासीन चन्द्रसूर्यायुतप्रभम् ।
अर्धाम्बिकासमायुक्तं प्रविभक्तविभूषण्म् ।
कोटिकन्दर्पलावण्यं सदाषोडशवार्षिकम्
मन्दस्मितमुखाम्भोजं त्रिनेत्रं चन्द्रशेखरम्
दिव्याम्बरस्रगालेपं दिव्यभरणभूषितम्
— — — — — — — — —
एवं चित्ताम्बुजे ध्यायेदर्धनारीश्वरं शिवम्
पुरुषं वा स्मरेत्देवं स्त्रीरूपं वा विचिन्तयेत्
अथवा निष्कलं ध्यायेत् सच्चिदानन्दलक्षणम् ।।

Realisation of *Para* is the highest stage which a Sadhak can attain and having attained it he truly becomes Shiva and Bhairava himself and is entitled to say Shivoham Bhairavoham शिवो स्म भैरवोम I don't think even the Kundalini Yoga takes the Sadhak who practices it beyond the stage of *Ardh-Narishwar*. The Kundalini rising from the muladhar and piercing the successive chakras while traversing the Sushumna Nadi ultimately meets Shiva in the Sahasrar. She is there seen as Anand Bhairavi in cosmic union with Anand Bhairava. That again is the stage when Shiva in union with His creative or feminine aspect puts the creative wheel into motion. The Ardha-Narishwar stage appears to be lower than that of *Para*. You will recall that in course of my conversation with you I specifically enquired as to what could be beyond the Ardha-Narishwar concept and myself suggested that it may be Aghora and in reply you, agreeing with me, said that it is Aghora. It may be that *Para* and Aghor both take the Sadhak to the penultimate stage of his Sadhana.

I don't know what particular forms of Sadhana are prescribed for Aghora or Para by the Trika-system. It appears that the Trika equates Para with Aghora and the Aksharas constituting the mantra appear to be identical for both. I take it that the Malinivijaya deals with the Sadhana of Para or Aghora and this has been elaborated by Mahamaheshwar Shri Abhinava Gupta at great length in his Malinivijaya-varttika and Tantralok. I have no practical knowledge of the Trika system and will not attempt to go further in a matter which is outside my beat. You can speak on the subject with supreme authority.

It seems to me that Bhagwan Gopinath Ji was a Yogi who had reached the stage which, according to the Trika, is called Siddhatma. The question is what did he do when he lived in a house in Rangteng (Srinagar) for over seven years. From the description of his mode of living during this period as given by Pandit Shanker Nath Fotedar in his biography of Bhagwan Gopinathji, it appears that the latter had become disinterested in his surroundings and had almost shut himself in a room which, according to his own wish, remained unswept and untidy. A safe inference can be drawn that in such surroundings and in such a room it would have been difficult to perform any ritual worship with the usual articles used in such rites. His sadhana appears to have been entirely contemplative and meditative. Could it have been the practice of Kundalini Yoga or practice of *Aghora* or *Para* Sadhana in accordance with the mode of such sadhana as prescribed in Shakti worship or did he adopt and pursue some shakta or shambava line as indicated by the Trika system. Since there are common features in both systems he might have followed a path indicated by both of them. You can illumine this area of darkness.

To sum up briefly I will request you to throw light on the following two questions:

(i) What is the path to be followed by the Kashmiri

Pandits. their traditional form of Shakti worship or the path indicated by the Trika system?

(ii) What could have been the mode of sadhana followed by Bhagwan Gopinathji during the last phase of his spiritual efforts?

This letter has become long and discursive. I have ventured to express my own views on some of the questions raised by me. I have done so in a spirit of humility and with a view to seek your clarification on the topics discussed by me. Kindly favour me with a reply at your convenience.

With respects I remain.

Yours with devotion

Sd/- S. N. Katju



MR. JUSTICE S. N. KATJU

ERRATA

Page No.	Line No.	read	instead of
Preface	23	raised by him	by him
Preface 2	6	Trika	Treka
2	2	Bhairava	Bhairva
2	2	Bhuteshwar	Buleshwar
2	27	Vijayayottar	Vyayottar
3	11	Stuck	Struck
6	15	I had obtained	I have got
6	21	I do not know	I do now know
8	26	Kashmiri Pundits	Kashmiri Pudits
14	26	What the crea-	What the erea-
15	34	Param Sriva	Puram Shiva
17	7	कपालिनम	कपलिनम
17	8	कन्यें	कन्ये
17	9	भिक्षाटंन	भिक्षाटम
21	3	(सकल ब्रह्म)	(सकल वृक्ष)
25	26	Six Kanchukas	five kanchukas
25	26	eliminate 'and eleven'	
25	27	eliminate 'Maya'	
26	5	सर्वं	शिवि
26	19	विद्या	विश्वा
33	6	पूजयामि	पूजायामि
33	16	भट्टारिकाये	यटारिकैै
34	19	"Pure Mirror"	"Pure Minor"
37	18	शिवो ऽ हम् भैरवो ऽ हम्	शिवो स्म भैरवोम

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(Dhyan of Para in Roman Script)

Amritarnava madhyodyat manidweepe manorame,
Kalpavriksha vanantasthe nava manikya mandape,
Navaratnamayam Shrimat Sinhasan gatambuje,
Trikonantah Samaseenam Chandra Suryayut prabham,
Ardhambika Samayuktam Pravibhakt Vibhushanam,
Kotikandarpa lavanyam Sada Shodash—Varshikam,
mandsmit mukhambhojam trinetram Chandra—Shekharam,
Divyambar Sragalepam divyabharan - bhushitam,
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Evam Chittambuje dhyayedardhnareeshwaram Shivam,
Pumrupam va Smared Devi Streerupam va Vichantyet,
Athava nishkalam dhyayet Sacchidanand lakshnam.